(c) The reasons for their pendency mainly are as under:

i) Excessive demand for employment.
ii) Disputes amongst the land owners/losers themselves with regard to nomination of their dependents for employment.
iii) Cases in the civil courts taking their own time where judicial scrutiny is involved.

(d) For early disposal of these cases negotiation as far as practicable are being held with the parties in association with the district administration and public representatives.

Privatisation of coal mines

628. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of COAL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are stepping towards privatising the coal mines in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any proposal to lease coal mines to former colliery owners having experience in coal mining;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL AND MINES (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) and (b) Government have taken steps to open the coal sector for private participation. Accordingly the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2000 to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 has been introduced in the Parliament with the following objectives;

i) To allow Indian companies *i.e.* companies registered in India to mine coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption; and
ii) To engage in exploration of coal and lignite resources in the country.

(c) to (e) As per the Amendment Bill the following agencies can do non-captive coal mining:

i) The Central Government or a Government company or a corporation owned, managed or controlled by the Central Government or a State Government or any corporation owned, managed or controlled by the Central Government and a State Government; or

ii) a person to whom a sub-lease has been granted by any such Government, Government company or corporation under proviso to Clause (c) of Sub-Section of Section 3 of the Act; or

iii) a company as defined in the Companies Act, 1956.

Explosion in trucks carrying ammunition near Bikaner

629. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ:
DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a convoy of trucks carrying tank, ammunition went up in flames after an explosion in one of the trucks near Bikaner, Rajasthan;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the quantum of loss in terms of defence equipments and casualties; and

(d) the measures taken/proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) An Army convoy of mainly civilian trucks carrying ammunition stationed near Military Station, Bikaner caught fire on 11th January, 2002 at 1500 hours. A Court of Inquiry has been ordered to investigate the cause of the fire and to ascertain the details of the loss due to the outbreak of this fire. From the preliminary investigation it has been ascertained that 17 Army vehicles and 161 Civil Transport vehicles, army assets including ammunition, a unit run canteen, officers Mess, and STD Booth have been destroyed/ damaged. Two civilian persons have been reported to be killed and 13 injured in the incident. Exact details of the losses will be known on the finalization of the Court of Inquiry. To prevent reoccurrence of such incidents enhanced security is being provided to convoys carrying ammunition and restrictions have been imposed on number of vehicles in a convoy. Further, it has been decided to use military transport and trains to the maximum extent possible for the movement of ammunitions.